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our VOICE

the sparechange magazine

sold by donation

OCT2001



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Providing poor men and women with a chance to take control of their lives is the purpose of **Our Voice**. For six years now we have given opportunities to more than 1500 people in Edmonton who have found themselves living in poverty.

Our Voice, is a project of Bissell Centre, and was founded in 1994 to empower people who were homeless or at risk of becoming so, as they work toward gainful employment and self-sufficiency. With more than a six-year history, the **Our Voice** organization has gained notoriety for honest news reporting and our unique approach to addressing poverty.

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OUR VOICE is published to provide an income opportunity for economically marginalized people in our society while communicating their issues to the public.

OUR VOICE is a NON-PROFIT program that survives on vendors, advertising contributions and Tax Deductible Donations.

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Our Voice welcomes written submissions (particularly those on PC or Mac compatible diskettes), cartoons, photographs or artwork.

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Our Voice is a member of the North American Street Newspaper Association (NASNA).

God Help Us!

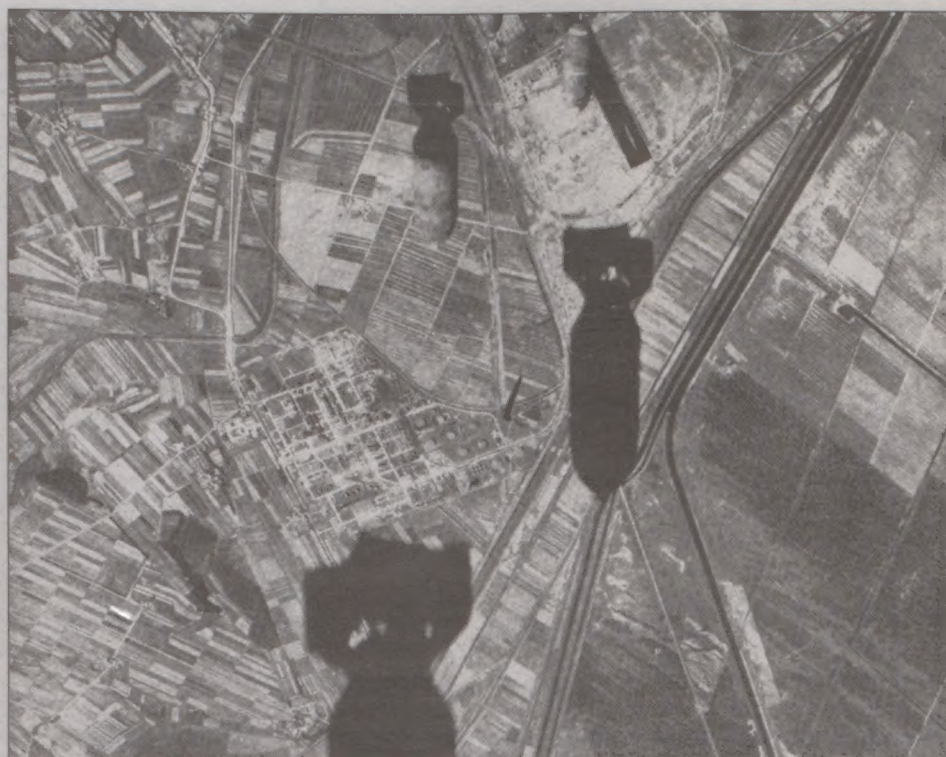
It's midnight September 11, 2001 and my nine-year-old daughter can't get to sleep. She's afraid of what has happened today, afraid of what will happen next, afraid of war, afraid of death. I tell her that everything is all right. We are safe. The walls of our house are solid around us, and I can protect her from any possible danger. She is not easily assured, but slowly fear gives way to exhaustion and she sleeps.

But as she sleeps, I cannot help but wonder. How do I explain to her that the world is not as it should be, that the things she fears need to be faced, that war is real, death is real, and that we humans are capable of doing terrible things to each other.

And more importantly how do I explain to her that peace and love are necessary acts of courage in the

face of that knowledge?

I feel that my placating answers have failed her, telling her what she most wanted to hear and what I most wanted to believe. The whole premise of the movie "Life is Beautiful" was this, a father successfully constructing a barrier between real-life horrors and his child. It was far from plausible because in real life that barrier cannot stand. Our children live and grow in the same world we do, the world we create by our choices. Our challenge is to help them become adults able to face even the toughest realities and, in spite of their fear, make choices to love. Please God help us.



For My Young Friends Who Are Afraid

There is a country to cross you will find in the corner of your eye, in the quick slip of your foot — air far down, a snap that might have caught. And maybe for you, for me, a high, passing voice that finds its way by being afraid. That country is there, for us, carried as it is crossed. What you fear will not go away: it will take you into yourself and bless you and keep you. That s the world, and we all live there.

WILLIAM STAFFORD

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the rhetoric

"We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbour them."

PRESIDENT BUSH, SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

"We don't differentiate between those dressed in military uniforms and civilians. They are all targets in this fatma."

OSAMA BIN LADEN, JULY, 2001

"This is no time to be precious about locating the exact individuals directly involved in this particular terrorist attack.... We should invade their countries, kill their leaders and convert them to Christianity. We weren't punctilious about locating and punishing only Hitler and his top officers. We carpet-bombed German cities; we killed civilians. That's war. And this is war."

SYNDICATED COLUMNIST ANN COULTER
(NEW YORK DAILY NEWS, 9/12/01)

"We look at these men as heroes and martyrs who followed in the steps of the prophet, peace be upon him. We called and they answered."

OSAMA BIN LADEN, JULY, 2001

"Those who make war against the United States have chosen their own destruction. For everyone who wears a uniform, get ready. The US will do what it takes to win this war."

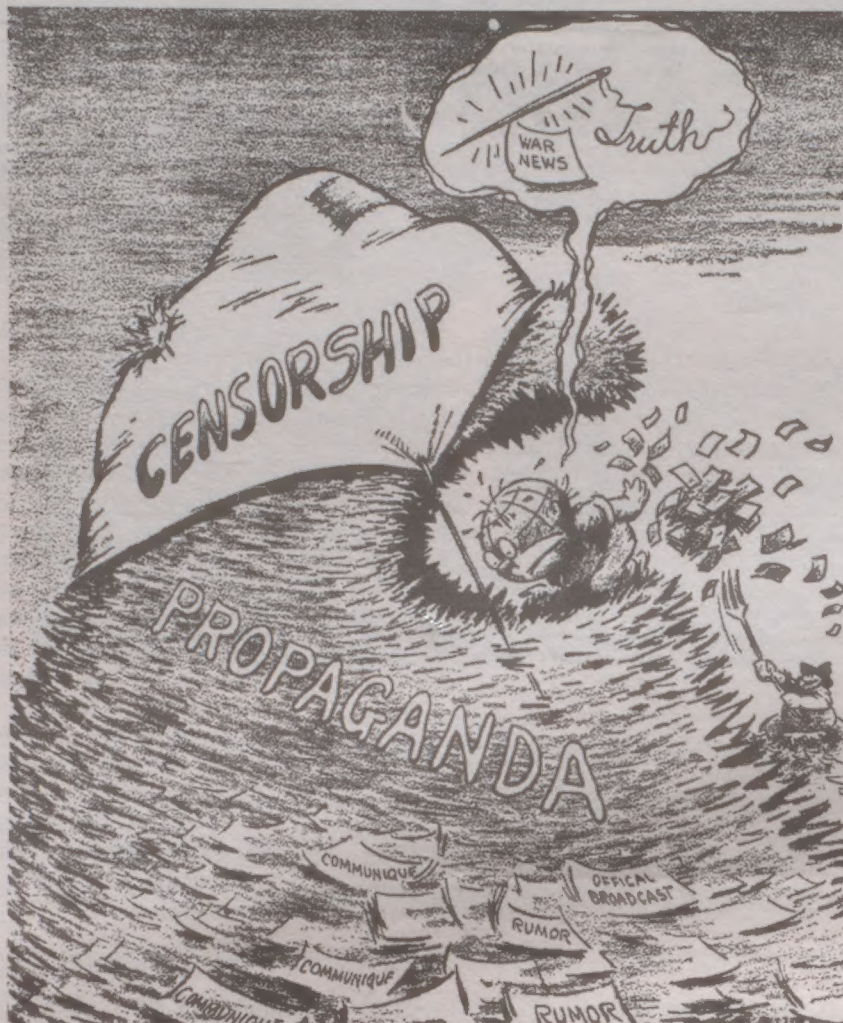
PRESIDENT BUSH, SEPTEMBER 17, 2001

"Once you call up the entire Muslim world, all believers will be mobilized. I think there will be a bigger conflagration than imagined."

HAMUD GIL, FORMER PAKISTAN CHIEF OF INSERVICE
INTELLIGENCE, SEPTEMBER, 2001

"We will pursue nations that provide aid or safe haven to terrorism. Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists."

PRESIDENT BUSH, SEPTEMBER 20, 2001



TRUTH
thin
targets
terrorists

OBJECTOR

In line at lunch I cross my fork and spoon
to ward off complicity — the ordered life
our leaders have offered us. Thin as a knife,
our chances to live depends on such a sign
while others talk and the Pentagon from the moon
is bouncing exact commands: Forget your faith;
be ready for whatever it takes to win: we face
annihilation unless all citizens get in line.

I bow and cross my fork and spoon: somewhere
other citizens more fearfully bow
in a place terrorized by their kind of oppressive state.
our signs both mean, Your hostages over there
will never be slaughtered by my act. Our vows
cross: never kill and call it fate.

WILLIAM STAFFORD

William Stafford is an American poet who spent four years in a
conscientious objector camp during World War II

letters to the editor



Letters to the Editor can be mailed to:

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F FEEDBACK

flight
flimsy
friends
fortunes

So the market drop following the Twin Towers Catastrophe has erased the entire Dot Com fortune. So temporal are the materiality of property, possessions, money and power. Fortunately, that is not what life is all about. For life is a dance. It is an act of celebration and growth. Each fortune contains its thorn. Each misfortune its hidden gift. So temporary are we! The New York Twin Towers Catastrophe looms a large screaming ghost in our psyches, demanding we do something. Why are we being tested so?

Beginning on October 2nd is the Jewish celebration of Sukkoth. It is a seven-day festival, and it goes like this. Each family moves out of their house and into their backyard (if they have one.) Each family builds a temporary shelter out of found materials, such as sticks, grasses, and wood. The structure can be small or large, but the ceiling is not too high. No nails or any metal can be used to attach the walls to the roof. The roof must be covered with grass or brush. It is necessary to see the stars through the grass.

Each Sukah or hut is hung with food and herbs such as

onions, garlic, peppermint, spearmint, comfrey, bags of apples, oranges, tangerines, pomegranates, dates, and figs. People hang pictures on the walls and put lush rugs on the dirt floors, and learn to make their Sukah a livable and comfortable space for living, visiting, and sleeping.

The reason for this holiday is three-fold.

First, it is a holiday to commemorate the flight of the Jewish people out of slavery in Egypt into the desert.

Second, it is to remind ourselves, by living in such a flimsy structure, that all that we have, including our lives, can be snatched away in a moment, so we should count our blessings while we have them, and keep our hearts and minds adaptable to changing fortunes without being internally changed or damaged. How we live is more important than what we have. This has always been true. But, this is an especially important message in these dark times, when we are mourning the loss of so many.

Thirdly, the holiday of Sukkoth is for us to use the time to think about homeless people, who don't have the option to go back into a house seven days later to live comfortably,

warm, secure, and legal. We should use this time to develop an understanding of what their lives must be like, living under bridges, in cardboard boxes, in their cars, and out in the woods trying to hide from Parks and Recreation Rangers and the police.

In Santa Cruz, where I live, such a backyard structure for religious purposes is quite legal. There is a backyard exception to the camping ordinance which allows for a fenced in side yard obscured in view from the street or a backyard to be used for camping provided it breaks no other health or safety codes. But, homeless people, who must, by necessity live out of doors or in a vehicle have no such "exception."

So please, if you are Jewish, build a Sukah in your own backyard, and move the wife, the kids, and the pet hamster outside with you for seven days. Make a game out of it. Invite friends, both Jewish and non-Jewish over to visit and feed them well. Light candles and reflect on all that life has to offer us.

BECKY JOHNSON

from New York



Here in New York, we are hit like never before. This city, this "world capital" we've all taken pride in--which we've thought impregnable--is suddenly sadly vulnerable. And it's a hard thing to come to grips with.

One thing that hits us New Yorkers is not only the horror of individual stories that unfold before us each day--but the weariness we feel when contemplating the future: the long rebuilding process, the uncertainty about our safety, the difficulty and probable long-term nature of any policy of retaliation that our government will embark on.

We know in our hearts that this threat can never be wiped out entirely--much like drugs cannot be wiped out, or poverty, or evil itself. But we have to make inroads, and fueling that necessity is a zeal that is almost unchecked--and which could lead to unnecessary and additional suffering for many here and abroad.

As to the ordinary street life of New Yorkers, well, every day brings amelioration, a replacement of the strange and shocking by the re-instatement of the quotidian. But then the stark reminder will always be here--the amputated skyline that for the rest of our lives will remind us of this catastrophe--much like a parent is reminded each time he or she walks past the room of a child who won't return.

But of course a wonderful thing has occurred in the midst of all this pain: political enemies actually have forgotten their hatred. Perhaps everyone--our mayor, governor, senators, congressmen--might remember, after the rawness of this tragedy passes, that there is always a reason to search for something in common.

As specifically to the homeless population--with whom, as editor of street newspapers, I work closely--there seems almost an extra level of understanding, as if a representative homeless voice might be saying: Yeah,

I know it's bad. It's been bad for a long time. Let me tell you...

When you reflect on all that's happened, certain facts, certain instances, jump out at you. I'm particularly struck by the comment of one man--a high executive at a Wall Street brokerage house who lost many of his employees. He reports having been tremendously shaken by the sudden shock of events. "I say hello to people in the streets now."

It's a transforming incident. It was also a devastating blow. New Yorkers have poured out their heart to the wonderfully heroic and selfless firefighters and policemen, many of who have lost their lives.

Who knows? New York may become even stronger, more popular, more mythic. It surely has become more vulnerable.

RON GRUNBERG

Editor,

Upward & BIG news
New York City

ATTENTION READERS

Starting November 1st, the pale blue vendor tags will no longer be valid. In order to discourage fraudulent vending of Our Voice, we ask our customers and supporters to only purchase OV from vendors with bright yellow ID tags.

Thanks!

editorial opinion

how to win the war

It was chilling, horrific. It was diabolical in the means of its destruction – civilians used to kill civilians. Like all of us, I watched it over and over again – the planes coming in, the buildings imploding, the buildings coming down. How do you absorb that intensity of shock and horror? How do you total the reverberations of trauma or the waves of sorrow that emanate from the event into the psyche of all of us who thought we were safe?

Those vibrations do not settle easily. Maybe they shouldn't settle. Maybe they should stay with us forever as a reminder that this is what it feels like. This is what it feels like for so many of our brothers and sisters around the world who have lived this experience to greater and more enduring degrees. This is what we have funded and supplied the arms for. This is what we have turned away from and justified when it was happening over there.

What would we do with that knowledge? If we really absorbed that understanding, made it part of our beings, where would that wisdom lead us? The words of President Bush echo in the aftermath – "We will hunt them down....we will make no distinction between the terrorists and those who harbor them....we are the light to the world." And a shocked and trauma-

tized western world nods its assent.

But even as we settle our frightened children into bed and listen to endless analysis and watch the rescue efforts, there are hundreds of thousands of people just like us in their desire for safety for themselves and their children all over the world. The UN has warned that 6 million Afghans alone are at risk of death. "With so many on the move, food supplies running out and winter just weeks away, any military actions could lead to mass starvation."

So what should we, in the western world, do with our newly acquired knowledge? What should we do with those reverberations of shock? We should take them and turn them into mercy. We should make no distinction between the civilians who died at the hands of terrorists and those who may die at our hands. We should fill our planes with food, and medical supplies and warm clothing. We should bind the wounds of our own while binding the wounds of the world. We should re-build on the site of the World Trade Center a center for peace and true justice, a center for the equitable distribution of goods and global compassion. We should bury our bombs and turn our soldiers into peacemakers.

Then we would be a true "light to the world." Then the innocent blood that was shed would not have been shed in vain. The killing, as far as we can control it, would stop. And we would have won the war. We would have won the war with peace.

NATASHA LAURENCE



In meeting with interested Our Voice vendors and writers it was decided unanimously that Our Voice was committed to being a voice for peace. To me that was an act of courage. The vendors livelihoods are tied to paper sales, and in taking a definite stand in a time of strong emotion they risk alienating their fellow citizens with very practical consequences. We discussed that possibility, but the commitment remained. Our Voice is a voice for peace.

EDITORIAL **E**
echo
existing
equitable
experience

on respect

It's mid-September as I write this and now that summer has slid into autumn and the cool of my basement suite has gone from a blessing to a bother my thoughts turn to my less fortunate brothers and sisters. Winter is just a few quick months away. The time is just around the corner when we will want to huddle together for comfort and relief from the cold. A look at the various news outlets shows the Bush administration using the media and the media using the September terrorist attacks to create sensational, hawkish headlines and stories urging us along the road to armed conflict. If we are to believe what we see being whipped up in the media and add that to what we've learned from history, it seems that the time is also drawing nearer to when we might huddle together for comfort and relief from another cycle of unholy terror and violence. We need restraint, people. We need respect.

The aftermath of a horrific terrorist attack might seem like a strange time to be talking about respect but I see it as being instrumental in avoiding both a repeat of such an attack as well as an escalation of the violence. There was an incident involving one of the Our Voice vendors that might help to explain what I mean. A member of the Our Voice community – I'll call him Graham – got a job working for a roofing subcontractor here in Edmonton. The boss of the roofing company had employed him for several weeks, paying him every Friday. He was impressed enough

with Graham's work to give him a raise. This might have been a ruse however because the roofer later told Graham (on a Friday that he expected to be paid) that payday was being switched to every second Friday. When the second Friday rolled around I went with him to the jobsite to collect his paycheque. When we got to the site he was told that the crew hadn't been there for a few days. Graham knew which motel the out-of town crew was staying at so we drove out east of the city where Graham found out that the boss had checked his crew out the day before. Presumably he had left town, gone back to BC, screwing Graham for two weeks' wages in the process.

It happens too often that somebody suffers an injustice and then must seek recourse by him or herself. The victim gets worn down and frustrated by the laborious toil for justice and is sometimes moved to foolish and extreme measures. On the way back downtown I commiserated with Graham about his misfortune and we spoke gravely about what nasty price the roofer would have to pay if we laid hands on him right then. It was just talk. If we had acted on our anger and thirst for revenge that would have been

It happens too often that somebody suffers an injustice and then must seek recourse by him or herself. The victim gets worn down and frustrated by the laborious toil for justice and is sometimes moved to foolish and extreme measures.

stepping over the line. The reason it's unacceptable is because we recognize that every individual has basic rights that we must respect. The right to due process, for example. It's not respecting that right to pound the crap out of him no matter how justified such treatment might seem in the heat of the moment. Graham handled himself admirably. He was in a horrible position. He was completely tapped out because of the crooked roofer but he had no immediate recourse or relief. It's a double bind. The existing situation is unbearable but acting to satisfy an emotional impulse will only worsen the situation. Somebody puts you in that situation and there's little you can do about it.

I come from Cape Breton where the phrase "What's your father's name?" has become a verbal icon uttered by those who are implicitly aware of the interconnectedness of folk. Truly civilized folks cherish justice – and don't think for a moment that

myself and others urging caution don't want terrorists brought to justice. We also recognize however that justice and respect

and peace are among the hallmarks of civilized humanity and that greed and desire for revenge are dehumanizing obstacles to the achievement of a just civilization. People in the United States – all over the world for that matter – have every right to be horrified and angry but it will do damned little good to throw the bodies of armed forces personnel into the breach blown open by the terrorists.

A different approach is required to patch this wound. While there are cooler heads in the States preaching restraint, Mr. President and his cronies appear to be goose-stepping along to the tune called by the lowest common denominator. And what that might look like? A striker in the NRA perhaps, anxiously waiting for his colours, his membership badge, to sew onto the back of his camouflage hunting jacket. Or maybe it's an avaricious suit working for some black-ops government contractor. Either way, gun-toting, bow-legged Mr. Bush seems determined to drag us kicking and screaming into the desert mountains to hunt down bad guys while the buzzards of the military-industrial complex circle greedily overhead just waiting to pick their last pound of flesh from our shattered bones. We must urge our leaders to proceed cautiously. Justice MUST be served but it's important to remember the words of Bruce Springsteen; "Blind faith in your leaders will get you killed." Just as charity begins at home, so too does the preservation of the human species. We won't last long without the fundamental respect compelling us to live and let live.

RON MACLELLAN

C COMMENTARY

cow
culture
camera
children
capacity



barbecuing the sacred COW

something really radical

Where were you when Armageddon started? A colleague phoned me to tell me to watch TV. My first reaction to that picture of the Empire State Building in front of a gutted city was annoyance at the bland unctuous voices of commentators off screen. Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!

My second reaction was: Yeah! Those buildings were butt ugly against the skyline anyway!

My third reaction, upon realizing that all those planes were carrying passengers was overwhelming sorrow and horror as the message worked its way past layers of denial. Nobody wanted this. We all know it has been coming for a long time. It has happened before. We have learned nothing.

My heart is with those joyous Palestine children flashing peace signs at the camera. It is with those people in pickups pushing through hot, crowded dusty streets. How many homeless people, huddled in their piles of rags on the streets of a cold northern city, have entertained themselves with fantasies of "blowing the rich bastards up!", as they tried to shiver themselves into a few hours of sleep? These are my people, my brothers, my sisters, the poor of the world. I share their joy. I share their rage.

My bookshelves are full of books where bad guys routinely blow up planets and suns. We have seen much more impressive special effects from Hollywood; Independence Day springs to mind. We have steeped in a culture of violence since Homer. We have made the act of killing our penultimate dramatic art and statement, followed closely by depictions of loveless procreation and the worship of power and wealth. Why are we surprised it has come to this?

The practice of trade has been a war of the rich against the poor, everywhere. Are we surprised that a few individuals from a part of our world where desperation is just a daily fact of life have struck back? We cringed to see dancing in the streets of places where explosions, bullets and sudden death are everyday occurrences. These are the victims of a far more insidious act of violence, violence against the spirit that makes the expectation and acceptance of "unrest" in the Middle East an acceptable part of our modern world culture. Well, now there is "unrest" in the West too. My sorrow is for those people in those collapsing buildings and for their loved ones and kin who have the ever so much more difficult task of rebuilding their lives in the aftermath. But my sorrow is not only for the innocent. If you were flying a plane into the side of a building, I grieve for you too, because the worst injury we do to ourselves is to hate.

"After the first death, there is no other." Yeats wrote.

How many deaths of hope and love and joy does a person have to experience, until flying an airplane into a building is not frightening anymore? My deepest sorrow of all is for those poor creatures who have so suffered from the death of empathy, spirit and capacity to care for their fellow humans in this world we have all created, that they could plan, fund and implement a deed such as this. May God grant them the mercy they were unable to give, because this is not something most humans are going to be able to grant them.

Where were you when Armageddon started?

I was asleep, dreaming of love. I awoke to horror. Are we all awake yet? For me the only path with heart is to say, "We are big enough to forgive you." Can we be this radical? Can we find in this traumatizing event a way to transcend hatred and anger? Can we forgive ourselves as we forgive others? I hear a lot of anger, a lot of accusations that American involvement in world affairs has devastated other countries with tremendous loss of life, that essentially America has asked for this. This hatred, this anger, this polarizing of feelings, this searching for someone, anyone, to blame is the worst of the injuries we as fellow citizens of this planet have to heal. Can we be this radical? Can we do it together?

TERESA MCBRYAN

Has anyone else out there tried to find housing lately? Well, it was my turn last month. Now, I, along with my two kids, live in subsidized housing. That should be good, you'd think. Why would she want to move, you might be asking yourself. To answer that, I'd have to try to give you a mental picture of our neighbourhood and in particular, my house.

First of all, we are all poor. That means when I put out my garbage, there's usually someone picking through it minutes later. Hey, I've found some perfectly good books, cups and dessert mix in there myself!

Truthfully most of my house is decorated in early "dumpster". My couch, rescued from a fire, is perfectly fine for us. So, we all smell like we've been roasting marshmallows after we sit on it, but these are minor inconveniences. Beggars can't be choosers, and all that. Second, if anyone tells you that Canada's population is declining, just send them over to my neighbourhood! There are easily 50 kids in one row of houses alone. Most of these kids are tough little buggers who can swear a blue streak. I mean they routinely put most sailors to shame. The oddest thing is to hear mothers screaming out to their swearing kids "Quit your f'ing cussing!" That one

always makes me give my head a shake.

Then there is the actual quality of workmanship in the house. Let's just say that whoever the contractors were, they must have underbid by so much just to get the bloody job that they ran out of materials to finish it. For example, there is more frost on the inside of my bedroom window on any given winter morning than there is on my car windows. Somehow the doorway, in keeping with the overall work quality, is actually bigger than the door itself. So, unless I hang a blanket over the doorway, it snows in my house when the wind blows. There are holes in my ceiling, something to do with faulty caulking of the tub, they said. I can't cook more than tea and toast with all but 1 burner not working.

I kept envisioning a working stove, a sturdy ceiling and a warm house when I put my notice in. Boy, was I in for a nasty surprise. You see, last year at this time, vacancies in the City of Edmonton were at an all time low of 1%. As Alberta's economy has been seen to rise, so has the influx of people into Edmonton and surrounding areas. In my search for housing, which took me from Entwistle to Tofield to Redwater to Wetaskiwin I discovered what many others already knew and that is

out of my range

that there is no affordable housing anywhere near here! Sure there were pent-houses for \$1,800 a month, oh yeah, and houses for \$1,200 (not including at least \$250 utilities/mo), but best of all were the places I could almost afford. There was this one 3 bedroom, acreage, room for horses, dogs, cats, hyper children I was so excited; it had just been listed that morning in the paper. I phoned at noon. It was gone. The landlord said he must have received 150 calls in just 5 hours.

I still wasn't about to be discouraged. I had packed most of my stuff already and was sure that I would find a place, just as I always had before. But this time it was different, the rare place I could afford, was gone before I could get there, and people were coming to look at my place to rent. I have never been a poker player, but let's just say that I knew when to fold. I called the offices of my housing unit and explained that I would like to retract my notice to

vacate. The lady on the other end made it clear that she was quite sure that it was too late to do any such thing and continued to berate me on being so foolish in such a housing market. It didn't do any good to claim my ignorance; she was too busy telling me how ignorant I was. On the off chance that it may not be too late, she would call me back later that day with the final word on whether I could stay or not. When the phone rang that afternoon, I ran to get it and crossed my fingers. It was her. She was still telling me how dumb I was, but she managed to squeeze in that I could stay and that's all that I heard. I was so happy to be able to stay in my cold, snow-blown, leaky, frosty, noisy house that I could have kissed her. I think I will, just as soon as I get unpacked!

H. SLADE

a sad Friday

What happened on September 11, 2001, in New York reminded me of what happened on March 17, 1988 in Halabja when the Iraqi regime committed the most tragic and horrible crime against the Kurdish civilian people.

That day Halabja was bombarded more than twenty times by Iraqi regime's war planes with chemical and cluster bombs. It was Friday afternoon. Hundreds of children were playing outside in front of their homes. They didn't have time to run back. They fell down

at the thresholds of doors and never rose again. In that tragedy five thousand people were killed, most of them children and women. Seven thousand people were wounded. In the same year the Iraqi regime committed another crime against the Kurdish people. They took 182,000 civilians to the desert and killed them. At that time the Kurdish people were scared, because they were lonely. They didn't have any friends except the mountains. Today we have friends across the world and Kurdistan is not under any siege.

It is very sad that this tragedy has repeated itself but this time it happened in the United States. It happened to innocent men, women and children who had done nothing wrong. I hope this won't happen again to anyone, and the world will be peaceful and there will be an end to all terrorism everywhere.

JALAL BARZANJI

Jalal is a Kurdish poet who works as a community activist with Kurdish people living in Edmonton. He is president of the Canadian Kurdish Friendship Association. He came to Canada in 1998.

a medal of respect

When I was growing up on a small reserve I never heard about the outside world. My grandparents were the ones who raised me. They taught me how to respect others and treat people in a good way. I didn't hear about the Vietnam War because we didn't have electricity. The only way we travelled was on a wagon pulled by horses. This all came to me when I saw the planes hit those towers. I asked myself why would people hurt innocent people. The respect for others has gone out the door as we move in this passing world. All I

could do was pray and ask the Creator to watch over our little ones.

I went to Bissell like any other day, but the energy was low. The mood was all jumbled up. I saw people watching the goings-on in the drop-in. There were others getting on in spite of it all. This made me think of all the street people who were affected by this. They too were there and probably were wondering where they would get their next meal. The poor and homeless are sometimes forgotten and they are people like anyone else. The first

thing that came to me was 'What's going to happen next?' The world stopped in that second.

They say the eyes are the windows of the soul. I have seen a lot of lost souls. The hurt I have seen and the tears were too much for me. I shut off my TV and prayed for the people. I learned to care for people no matter if they are rich or poor.

I want to pray for those who lost their lives and the heroes who risked their lives. We must honor those who lost their lives to save others. I have more respect for policemen and firemen, they deserve a medal of respect. I will never forget them and they have gained my highest honor. Respect.

LEN BLACKFOX MARTIAL

PERSPECTIVE P

poor
prayed
powerless
policemen



recycling the male code

men are men do

The rules of masculinity have changed little in the last couple of decades. Men are restricted to sticking with a script that has outlived its usefulness. A lot of anguish and discomfort exists among men as they hang on to the roles that have been cast for them. Turn on the television and Hawkeye Pierce is doing the same shtick in M.A.S.H. as he has done for twenty years. These re-runs are old, weary, and boring. Men insist on staying within the program and are suffering the same fate as Hawk-Eye.

Comfortable with their scripted beliefs and values men for the most part stay within role. Strong, tough, stoic, problem solvers, angry are some of the words that define men. I'm sure you can come up with others. Competitive, decisive, rational and independent also come to mind. My favorite is "experts about sex". Guys are assumed to have steely gazes and rugged exteriors to match stone emotions. It is written in the story that is transmitted to men from the time they are toddlers.

The things men do define their masculinity. Earning money, financial power, action, being goal-orientated, making decisions are a few things that men do to stay within their assigned roles. There are some others to add here like men are always in control, reasoned thinkers, exert force, display power and my personal favorite; men are carnivores. I mean, is it proper for a real man to be

found eating limpy vegetation when red meat is available?

Okay, so there are these things that men do and that men are that flesh out and define masculinity. (By the way, it is not required to consider their carnivorousness. I tossed that in to justify my fondness for red meat.) Men are obliged and often pressured to stay within the storyline. A man that shows emotion or weakness by crying or admitting confusion risks being called wimpy, mama's boy, or powerless. These messages and cues are delivered to guys from an early age. They come from many directors and directions. Parents, other children, television, movies, and magazines push men to stay within character. We wonder why men have a high incidence of heart and other stress related diseases. It is a lot of pressure to live up to these expectations.

It is these very things that men are and men do that cause so much trouble in their lives. For example the belief that men must be stoic, or tough. To hold that is to shut out all emotions and feelings. What does this lead to? Men generally sputter and cough when it comes to expressing feelings with one exception - anger. How about the belief that men are always in control or decision makers? Mix those beliefs with anger and it usually has the outcome of violence or abuse. Feelings and emotions are generally accepted as belonging to the other gender and men in relationships often rely on their partners to care for their own emotional needs. Men have learned to be emotionally illiterate. Emotions are women's work.

What happens to a man who decides to deviate from the script of what men are and what men do? A few years ago I resolved to change many of the beliefs and values I held, feeling that they were not working. I made the decision to "get in touch with myself". The most common remark I received from others was "you are getting in

touch with your feminine side". Whenever I heard this remark, I wanted to rear back on to my hind legs and howl. Is it only females that have exclusive rights to feelings and emotions? I like to think that I was getting in touch with my human side.

I believe it is time to relax the rules of masculine and feminine. There is a script for women to follow as well. Women who dare to step out of character risk being called names that are not complimentary, just the same as men are. The restraints placed on men and women to keep within prescribed characters diminish the opportunity for all of us to reach our human potential. So I sit and ponder: Was I born with the urge to leave the toilet seat up or was that part of my masculine training?

CURTIS GROSCOE



S STREETS
side
square
straggly
san francisco



people are people

I lived in Kabul, Afghanistan, for four years. To me, Kabul is not a place name on a map, a deserving target for bombs and missiles, as a grieving America takes revenge on the devils who have murdered innocent people. It is a sad city full of people who have already endured more horrors and terrors and pains than most of us can even imagine.

The streets are as empty of demonic murderers as the streets

of Edmonton. If we walked there we would see shyly smiling kids caring for a few scrawny family sheep foraging in garbage piles for food; widows who have lost their sons and husbands, living in bombed out holes in the ground where their houses once stood, lining up to get a little bread for their empty stomachs; young men deprived of education and any chance to realize dreams of a family, moving warily along hoping no Taliban bullies will decide their beards are a little too short or their hair a little too Western and give them a beating.

We would see a lot of people trying to get out of town before war is declared against them. They do not have CBC Newsworld to give them the latest details, but they know they are in grave danger. They

also have no resources. There are hundreds of thousands of invalids in the city, many of them victims of the millions of Western-manufactured landmines that cover much of the country. They have no money, no food, no transportation—not even shoes, and it is a long walk to Pakistan through barren mountain passes and hot desert.

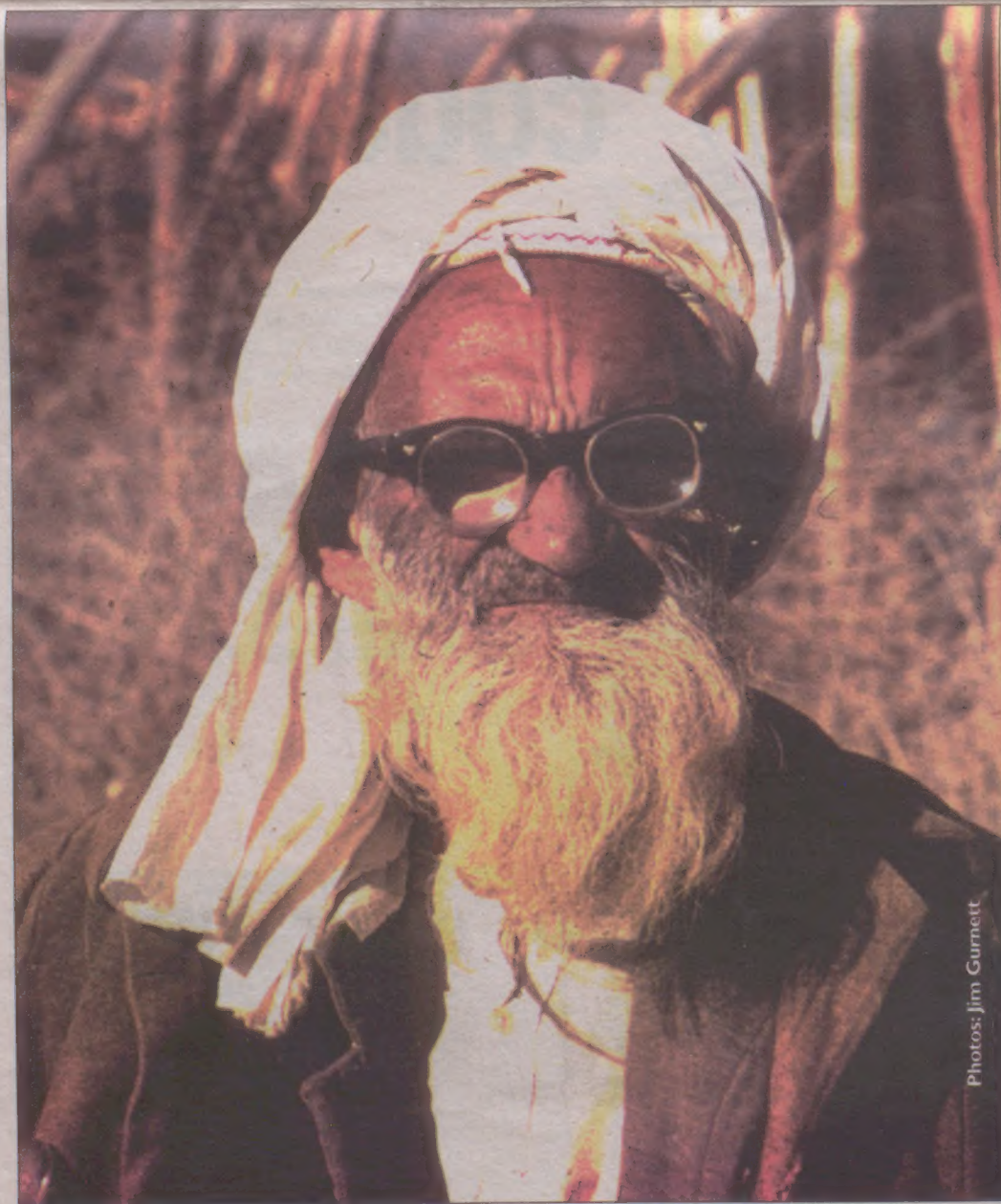
By what possible logic can we in North America believe any point is made about being truly human if military action is taken against these people? The chance that it will manage to wipe out the responsible parties—even assuming that all the “information” we are getting from the skilled investigators of the tragedies can be trusted—is small.

Already millions of people have lost their lives, their health, their homes and land, their loved ones and any sense of personal security because Afghanistan has for 23 years been used as a place for world powers to play their geopolitics. We ordinary people on this side of the world must be clear and forceful in letting our leaders know no possible good can come from military action against our vulnerable and damaged sisters and brothers in Afghanistan. Actions taken here that will get more of these folks killed will not accomplish any useful or positive result. It will just remind us once more of how badly we can behave.

There is no reason to believe well dressed politicians in the United States and Canada telling us confidently that Osama Bin Laden and his Taliban friends can be punished with little collateral damage (i.e. innocent people murdered, as happened to a bunch of other innocent people recently in New York and Washington....). At best, they don't know what they are talking about. Maybe they even know they're wrong, but want to go ahead. There is no way they can accomplish what they intend without terrible destruction.

How much less it would take in resources to heal this abused and terrorized land and its lovely people, to see that clean water, grain for bread, medicine, schools, modest little houses-- and peace, beautiful peace, was available to all. And how much more noble an expression of our grief.

JIM GURNETT



Photos: Jim Gurnett



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Photo: Linda Dumont

a reminder of children in poverty

Many of the poor in Canada are children. Last year's Campaign 2000 report stated that one out of five Canadian children lives in poverty, and their 2001 report, due to be released November 24 to 26, is unlikely to reveal much change.

Campaign 2000 started in 1989 when a group of NGO's got together with the goal of eradicating child poverty in Canada. The House of Commons then passed a resolution saying they would seek to eliminate child poverty in Canada by the year 2000, but that has not been accomplished. Since 1989, the number of Canadian children in poverty has increased by 402,000.

To remind the government of this failed promise; a photographic exhibit is being planned to co-incide with the annual Campaign 2000 report on Child Poverty. A group of Toronto based photographers, PhotoSensitive, plans to raise awareness of child poverty through photography by showing the children who are affected. Look for the exhibit in major cities across Canada at the end of November.

Peter Robertson, of PhotoSensitive, said, "We came together because we wanted to find things to enlighten people and to let them know what was going on. We produced a book after 11 years. June Callwood was

one of the people invited to the book launch."

Callwood told Robertson, "You guys are wonderful, but what are you doing tomorrow? For 25 years, I've been trying to get something done about child poverty."

Her remark was the kick-off for producing the exhibit showing children living in poverty. The photographs are "about kids who are caught up through no fault of their own."

In addition to PhotoSensitive, photographers from major Canadian newspapers including the Journal have volunteered their time to take pictures.

the Alberta scene

Here in Alberta, the children of families on Supports for Independence (SFI - welfare) are among the "poorest of the poor." SFI rates in Alberta were slashed 20 per cent in 1993, and have further fallen behind due to the rising costs of living. They are now about 30 per cent per cent behind what they were in 1993. Although other programs where funding was slashed, such as education and health care, have seen budget raises, there has been no raise in SFI rates.

Rod Adachi from the Alberta College of Social Workers said their group is just one of a large number of groups advocating for SFI rates to be increased. The government is currently doing a review of welfare rates, but no change is likely to occur until they release their 2001 budget in February.

Jim Hawley, a licensed clinical social worker, is also critical of the shortsighted way in which SFI clients are treated. "They will train you to clean bedpans but not as a nurse, or as a janitor but not to study engineering. In the long run, the money invested would be more than paid back in the income tax paid."

He said there are many people in the sys-

tem who are on SFI, whose parents are on it, and their grandparents were on it due to "learned helplessness" and the resulting "poverty cycle".

"People develop a sense of helplessness. They ask, 'Why should we try, we're poor? Why bother to get an education 'I'll never have a chance.' There's also the labeling 'if you're poor, you're no good. If enough people call you 'white trash', you'll become white trash."

Tina Stach, her husband and two children subsist on a monthly \$1,100 SFI cheque. She said it's "Very tough. We are calling on lots of food banks and agencies for clothing". Moving into subsidized housing with Capital Regional Housing has been helpful, but for Tina being on SFI is stressful. "I feel I'm being pushed into all of these programs all of the time, and it's hard. If I go somewhere, I go with my husband only," she said. She suffers from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, so it's difficult for her to even leave her house, but non-compliance could mean being cut off SFI.

For the working poor the picture is almost as grim, except they escape the stigma associated with collecting SFI. Even if both parents are working full time at minimum wage, the family lives in poverty. In 1970, one parent working for minimum wage

could support a family of four, but today could only support himself. In addition, there are often unexpected expenses, like needing a prescription, dental care, or eye-glasses; expenses covered by SFI but not covered for the working poor.

"We had to use the food bank twice this month," said Thelma Carter, a single parent with five children ranging in age from an infant to a 13-year-old. Carter works at two part time jobs to support the family; as a relief worker at the Bissell Centre and with a community-working group to raise awareness about fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal alcohol effects.

Carter said she utilizes all the resources available to provide for the family's needs. "The only time I buy new clothes is the beginning of the school year. I got them each one new outfit. They get school supplies through Tools for Schools."

Carter is hoping to return to school in January to complete her training to be a social worker. "My life is my practicum." She said. "I'm living what I want to do right now."

LINDA DUMONT

If you are concerned about the need for livable SFI rates and for a higher minimum wage in Alberta, check into the government website and voice your concern, or contact your MLA.

A group of Toronto based photographers plans to raise awareness of child poverty through photography by showing the children who are affected.



OV talks to the CIA

At a meeting of Community Involved Adolescents (CIA), on September 20, at the Jasper Place Gateway Foundation, Our Voice asked a group of young people, thirteen to fifteen to speak about their feelings and ideas about the recent terrorist attack on the WTC.

Some asked for justice. Vanessa, 15 said: "What they did was wrong. they should be punished because others doing the same thing are punished." Don, 14, added: "It's not right that thousands of people lost their lives and other people are cheering and happy about it."

Some contemplated the costs of seeking justice. Victoria 13 said of George Bush: "He's not right in seeking justice where a lot of other innocent people could be killed." Spencer, 14 was equally emphatic: "George Bush, if he bombs many other innocents will die. That is wrong!"

The group was willing to address root causes. "Racism and sexism does not belong in our world." Katie 13 declared "We should have zero tolerance for racism." Don 14, accepted that this was not easy. "People don't just become racist, they are brought up that way" Spencer addressed the role of parents. He said that parents sometimes would not accept their children's friends just because they were black.

There were expressions of fear about their own security. Christie, 14 said before she had "felt safe sometimes, now she feels unsafe and insecure all the time." Craig 14, is afraid Canada in the future will be a target for terrorist attacks. James, 14, brought it all home. He is scared that this will result in a world war and his school or West Edmonton Mall will be bombed. Some of the group's anxiety was focused on flying. Trish, 14 is now afraid to fly in an airplane, "it might be hijacked." Amber, 14 has taken the thought a step further. She says she is afraid of the new US policy of shooting down hijacked airplanes. Before, hijackers might land the plane to ask for something, now passengers have no chance at all. Katie on the other hand says she feels safer flying now with security being increased.

The group saw that there were problems with some Canadian and American institutions and policy Victoria saw that in the

North American justice systems, people get away on technicalities. Spencer perceived that Canada and the US are not prepared for terrorism. they should have better security. James suggested that the West should have a "rainy day fund" to help people when things like this happen. Vanessa complained that: "Canada and the US take in anyone where China and other countries don't accept people from elsewhere as easily". Spencer agreed, "Canada and the US are the best countries in the world to live in. but it should be harder to get into."

Three adults at this gathering also offered their viewpoint. Vince, 37, "Good and bad came out of this. The good side is that it brought people closer together. A month ago he said he was in communication with many people in the US via the Internet and they had nothing good to say about the people and country of Canada, they saw them as weak. Now in the last week he has heard nothing but good things about Canada. Angie, 32, told us that since it happened she has felt "numb, helpless, has so little control over things, she does not know how to react." She has young children and is planning a holiday. Now she is not so sure about flying. Trevor 27, finds it disturbing people should cheer and celebrate what happened. "A lot of countries see the US as putting their nose in other people's business. These countries expect the US to play a major role in helping other countries because they are a world power, then they turn around and criticize the US for doing what they wanted them to do and expected them to do in the first place".

Though some of the comments of this group were very straightforward and resolute there was absolutely no feeling of rancor or hatred in this group. They were thoughtful, concerned and very mature, but Katie has some words of genuine wisdom, when she says: "What has happened is making people feel sad and it would be good to get away from it for a while, just go to a movie, play games." One of the big jobs for parents in the future will be, despite the media bombardment of any major news event, and the degree of maturity of our young people, to remember that our kids still need time to be kids.

CEC GARFIN & THERESA MCBRYAN

Elect Myles Kitagawa

In Ward 4

Thinking Ahead

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LEVERAGE

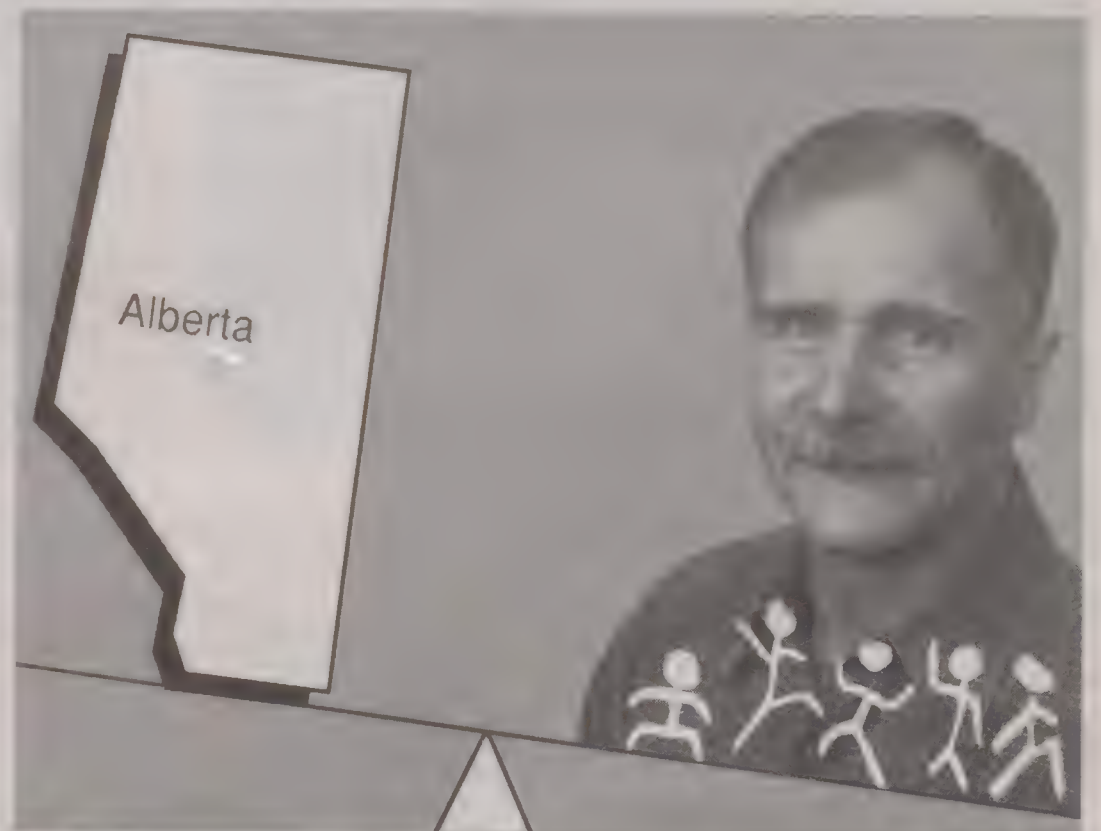
P POLITICS
party
profit
province
prosperity

I came to Alberta from Quebec more than twenty years ago. I was following my dream, looking for a better life for my family and myself. In those days Alberta was booming, the new El Dorado, the land of opportunity. We did well, we built a good life and fell in love with our new home, but something has changed over the years. The land of opportunity has become a land of struggle. Opportunity is being replaced with adversity and each year fewer Albertans are optimistic about their future.

The Alberta Leverage Party was founded to change all that. It is our goal to provide all Albertans with the tools they need to build a good life for themselves and their families, "to leverage the assets of Alberta for the benefit of Albertans." To accomplish this, we have developed a number of ideas that will open the door of opportunity for Albertans, without creating a cycle of dependency.

Ideas like no down-payment mortgages to medium and low-income Albertans who have demonstrated an ability to pay rent and utilities regularly. Every Albertan

Over the last few years I have heard many references to the Alberta Advantage, and I have often wondered, advantage for whom? So many Albertans have seen their household income stagnate or drop while trying to cope with ever increasing taxes, energy costs, and inflation that I see no advantage to them. Small business has faced the same challenges, as have family farms, so no advantage there either. Perhaps our advantage is simply that we are not as bad as the other provinces in Canada.



should have the opportunity to buy their own home.

Ideas like relief from high tuition rates for post-secondary students in trade schools and universities, either in scholarships or matching grants. It is to the young that we will look for our future prosperity.

Ideas like reducing or eliminating input taxes for farmers. By removing taxes from fertilizer, equipment and fuel, we offer farmers a chance to profit without the need for subsidies and, if they do profit, then and only then will they pay taxes.

Ideas like citizen-initiated referendum, the only tool we have that can hold our government to account and keep it responsible to the people it represents. Without citizen-initiated referendum, governments become arrogant and self-interested, a perfect example is the recent salary and benefit increases that both federal and provincial legislators voted themselves.

Ideas like Albertans should be masters in our own house. This might include our own pension plan, unemployment insurance plan or other "made in Alberta" programs. As the government of Alberta our primary commitment must be to the people of Alberta.

Over the last few years I have heard many references to "the Alberta Advantage" and I have often wondered, "advantage for whom?" So many Albertans have seen their household income stagnate or drop while trying to

cope with ever increasing taxes, energy costs, and inflation that I see no advantage to them. Small business has faced the same challenges, as have family farms, so no advantage there either. Perhaps our advantage is simply that we are "not as bad" as the other provinces in Canada.

Well, that's just not good enough. Alberta is a prosperous province but if the people of Alberta do not have the opportunity to share in that prosperity, it is meaningless. It is our intention to ensure that all Albertans are able to enjoy "the Alberta Advantage" we keep hearing about.

Albertans are industrious and independent people. We don't look for handouts or free lunches. Nor are we afraid to roll up our sleeves and work hard when the situation calls for it, but, when all is said and done, we should also be entitled to enjoy the fruits of our labour. The prosperity of Alberta is linked to the prosperity of Albertans. It is the responsibility of government to ensure that the people have the opportunity to build a strong future for themselves and their families.

Come join us. Together we can build the prosperous province Albertans want and deserve.

BEN LUSSIER, (780) 672-6874

Vote Oct. 15

Ward 5

Continued
Community
ED Commitment

GIBBONS

Vote Ward 4

Bob
WHYTE

- he lives here
- he got our pedestrian operated crosswalk light
- advocate for Seniors & for Affordable Housing
- he both talks the talk & walks the walk

poetry

your soul aches
for the many others...

The Remand Man

He could be your father, uncle, brother, cousin, husband or son.
He sits in silence in his cell; that he is in.
All he can do is re-read if any of the few letters he has received.
Or cry tears of sadness wishing he never did what he did
The food isn't much compared to what he used to get.

The guards attack with words or a hit
Some would rather be in segregation.
Others would rather be in baby dolls in the digger

Me I'd rather see them Rehabilitated.

But it's not up to me. It's up to you so listen to your mother.
Stay out of trouble,
You won't have to see the handcuffs a-coming.

The shame and humiliation
Is it worth it?

He reads a lot, it just doesn't pass the time

Chess or cards seem to fill the gap for awhile.
But it's back to the cell by nightfall.

Then he dreams of the day he is released.
Sometimes a tear hits the pillow

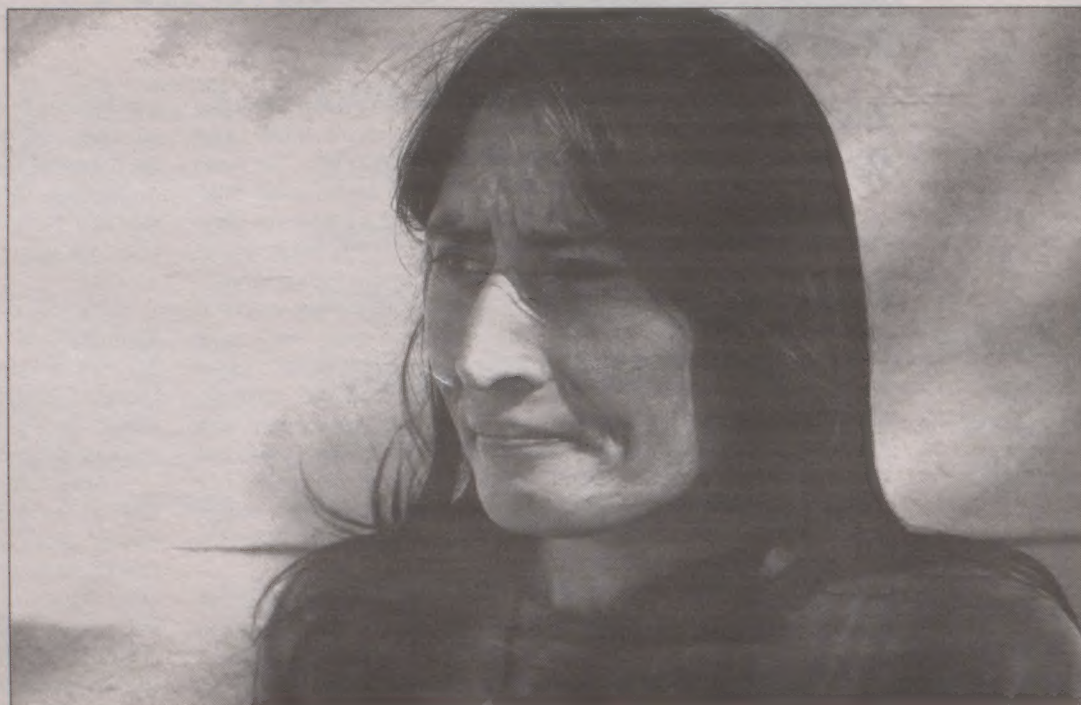
For he reminisces about the good times past
The joy of it all when he walks out

All set on staying out of trouble.
Some make it, some don't

They repeat themselves over and over
Never seeming to learn their life's lessons

So ask yourself before the crime
Can I serve the time?

MARIE IDA MURCHIE



Senseless

Senseless is
As
Senseless does
I was at home
Alone
When I saw it
Come
Crashing down
Bombed out
I will never believe this
But
My mind says
Yes. It is so. It is so.
A senseless massacre
Your soul aches
For the many others
Who are now
No longer on this shore
But now safely
On the other side of Home

CASEY HUNT



Photo: PF de Vos, Jr.

the people s columnist

on the road to recovery

C COMMUNITY
challenge
counselling
confidence

The Native Counselling Services of Alberta, located at 9636 - 102A Avenue in Edmonton, was established in 1970. The counselling centre is a non-profit organization that receives its major funding from the federal and provincial governments and other sources. It provides an outreach service that offers 30 rehabilitation programs to its clients. The other programs are employment development, personal development, community outreach work, networking, advocacy, and support services.

One recent addition to it's programs, the Homeless Prevention Program, is designed to help people avoid homelessness. Recently I spoke to one of the participants in that program. Darrel, age 26 currently serving two sentences, 24 months for drug trafficking and 18 months for robbery. Having served half of his sentence, he resides in a halfway house.

Darrel has experienced a big change in attitude since attending the Homeless Prevention Program. Prior to his involvement with the

program, he had a mean streak that made other people think twice before speaking to him. The mean streak had it's origins in his childhood. As a 5 year old he was physically abused by his many uncles. Once he was nearly beaten to death.

By age 14, Darrel was experiencing problems in school. While at his secondary school Darrel's anger reinforced his confidence encouraging him to challenge the racial slurs of many students who chose to pick fights with him at his school. These conflicts led to an indefinite suspension from school forcing Darrel to drop out.

The psychological impact of feeling singled out by school superiors and bigoted students made Darrel determined in proving himself but this time to a totally different class of society.

He started dealing drugs at age 19 and also committed robberies as a way of earning a living. Then at age 26, it all came to an abrupt end. In the year 2000, Darrel was found guilty of drug trafficking and robbery. As part of his sentence his probation officer referred him for treatment at the Stan Daniel's Healing Centre, but the adjustment was tough.

"I used to flip out on the staff

and because they pissed me off a lot. They tried to use stuff against me. I learned with the help of the counselor in the program helping me, that wasn't the way to deal with my anger. So I turned it around."

Marg Milicevic is the Program Manager of the Homeless Prevention Program over at the Native Counselling Services of Alberta. She is impressed with the immense progress Darrel has made.

"I think from when Darrel came through the doors to where he is now, he's made a lot of progress. He communicates with people and gives them proper eye contact, which is something he had a great difficulty with before, just his commitment and working towards that in view of the obstacles he's had to overcome and I mean those are very, very many."

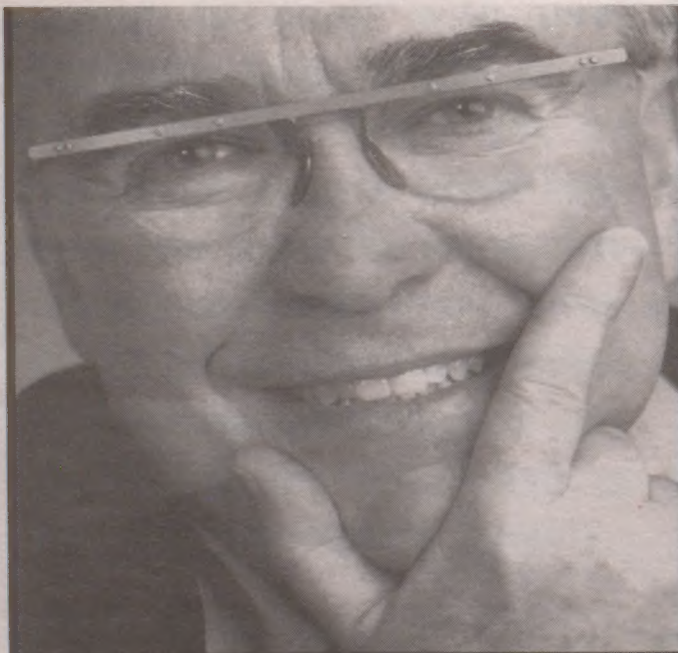
Now with one year remaining in his two-year sentence, Darrel plans to enroll in academic upgrading courses. And he plans to take it one day at a time. He is especially grateful for the moral support he's received from the caring people at the Native Counselling Services of Alberta.

JOHN ZAPANTIS



Photo: John Zapantis

I think from when Darrel came through the doors to where he is now, he s made a lot of progress.



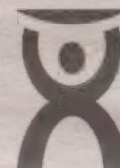
"Michael Phair:
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best politician on
council. He knows
the issues inside
and out and truly
has a desire to
make Edmonton
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- Kerry Diotte,
Edmonton Sun

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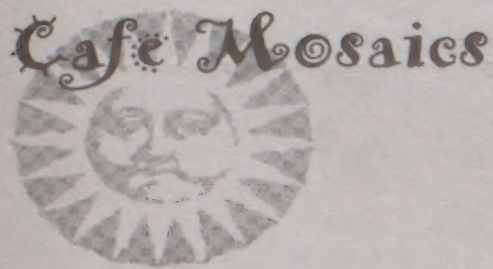
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com

citizen of
the month



Photo: PF de Vos, Jr.



Photo: Cec Garfin.

ina coleman

Ina, 88 years young, was born in the U.S.A. and raised on a farm in Saskatchewan. She not only survived the depression, she grew strong from it. She has lived in Edmonton the past 30 years. She is a widow, has 3 children, 9 grandchildren and 10 great grandchildren.

For the past sixteen years Ina has worked as a volunteer at the

Mennonite Centre for Newcomers four mornings a week helping many people to learn English. She also helps out at the Inglewood Community Hall conducting a sewing class.

Messages from Ina include; 'People should get off their couches and do anything to keep their mind and body active,' 'You would be surprised to learn how many people

die from boredom,' 'Love me if you will. Hate me if you must. But don't ignore me.'

She also says, "I can't jump as high as I used too, or spit as far, but I never could spit off the end of my chin."

Ina not only are you well deserving of this recognition, but you are a good role model for young and old alike.

CEC GARFIN

Every month, we will feature someone who has gone the extra mile to make a difference in the lives of those who are less fortunate. The Citizen of the Month will receive a dinner for two courtesy of Cafe Mosaics on Whyte Avenue.

CITIZEN C
chin
class
centre
community

vom

vendor of the month

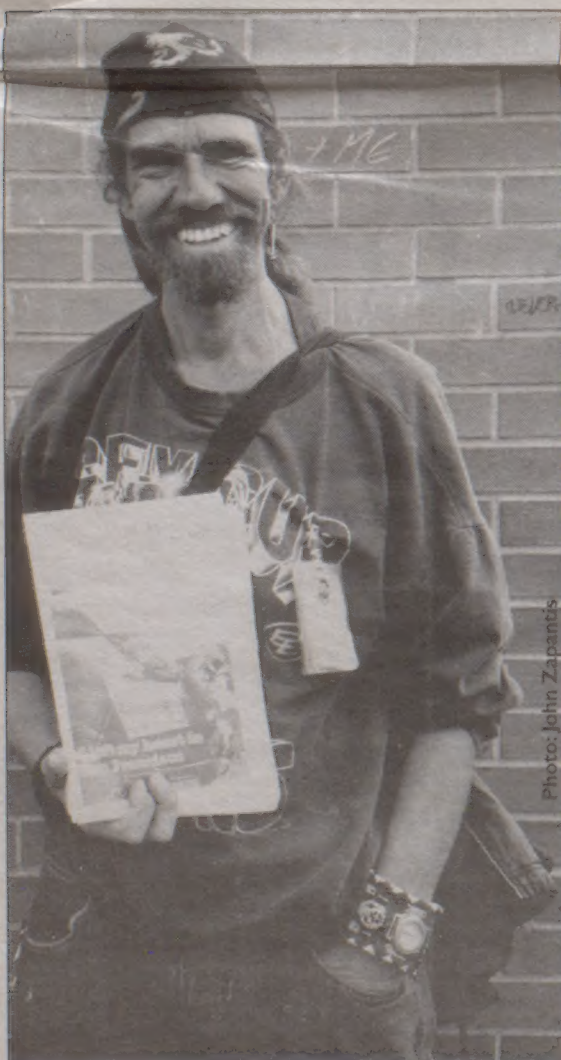


Photo: John Zapantis

He resembles a pirate, a man from another time, but those who have come to know Our Voice vendor, Jake Friedman know he has none of the pirates aggressive tendencies. Jake has a heart of gold and never fails to produce a winning smile when selling the paper

Born in a small town in central Saskatchewan, our new vendor is the middle child of three brothers and three sisters. The friendly and outgoing vendor discovered the newspaper through a friend who talked him into giving Our Voice vending a try.

He has been vending the newspaper since the middle of March, 2001. Jake is the proud holder of a Standard E Teaching Certificate and taught school for one year during the early 1970's. Throughout his 30 years of employment, he has worked at a variety of jobs, including landscaping and driving cab.

A regular contributor to Our Voice with his column, "The Street Goods," he takes great pride in his involvement with the project and the people.

"The purpose of the column, is to demonstrate how Our Voice is bringing hope into the lives of the people, vendors, customers and everybody who could use it as a positive experience to build on."

Jake has some favorite words of advice, taken from other vendors, that may be inspiring to beginning vendors. He says, "Probably the first thing I'd want to tell rookie vendors is a favorite quote from the guy that's interviewing me, 'Even a dog owns a piece of the sidewalk.' The guy who also brought me into this business told me, 'Whatever's happening, you leave your problems at home, before you go to work.' Another veteran vendor said, and it's an experience I share with him, 'Selling Our Voice has taught me how to smile on the street.'"

You can find Jake vending at one of three treasured locations, 104 Street and Whyte Avenue, 109 Street and Jasper Avenue, or at an anonymous location only he and his customers know.

JOHN ZAPANTIS

Performers Wanted!

Family Entertainment Night (Coffee House)

Open Stage! Live Music!
Light Supper! Poetry Reading!
DOOR PRIZES!!

Volunteers Wanted!

Tuesday, October 16

Supper - 6:30 pm

Entertainment - 7:00 - 9:00

Bissell Centre

10527 - 96 St.

Contact: Earl:423-2285 ext. 144

Coming in October...
The 2002 OV Calendar

